

Testimony of Alyson Baker, Executive Director  
The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum  
February 17, 2017  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations Committee

**RE: RESTORATION OF FUNDING FROM THE STATE BUDGET TO THE ART  
MUSEUM CONSORTIUM**

To the members of the Appropriations committee, my name is Alyson Baker and I am the Executive Director of The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield. I would like to offer the following comments on behalf of The Aldrich and my partners in the Art Museum Consortium - the Bruce Museum (Greenwich); the Florence Griswold Museum (Old Lyme); the Hill-Stead Museum (Farmington); the Lyman Allyn Art Museum (New London); the Mattatuck Museum (Waterbury); and New Britain Museum of American Art (New Britain). Formed in 2013, we represent seven independent leading art museums in Connecticut, who collectively offer some of the most exciting and stimulating exhibitions to be found anywhere. Our holdings consist of fine and decorative art treasures of incalculable value. Together we enhance the State's identity as a cultural hub, its attractiveness as a tourism destination, and the unparalleled quality of life found here.

First and foremost, I want to thank the Administration and the Legislature for including the Consortium as an item in the budget last year. The Consortium was appropriated \$287,313. What is unique about our group is that we have agreed to divide the funding equally between our seven institutions, focusing on unity to attain the flexibility and consistency of steady funding that will enable us to better plan exhibits and programs while strategically targeting our marketing efforts to maximize the use of these funds.

For us at The Aldrich it has provided much-needed general operating support to continue the Museum's tradition of fostering contemporary artists, mounting exhibitions that have a lasting impact in our field, and presenting dynamic education and community programs.

Collectively we also represent a significant impact for Connecticut in creating jobs, attracting visitors, and increasing State revenue.

Our museums employ people locally, purchase goods and services from within our communities, and market and promote our regions. Every year we are host to hundreds of thousands of visitors from New England, New York, New Jersey, and across the country. Our visitors stay in hotels, eat in restaurants and purchase goods in our shops. A study in 2012 by AFTA showed that "cultural tourists" spend an average of 65 percent more than other visitors.

We fully understand that these are very difficult financial times for the State. We believe that we have shown that by working together (instead of competing) we have achieved an efficient as well as an effective way for the State to make a relatively small investment that will bring a very good return. The AFTA report clearly showed that there is a leveraged return of \$6 for every \$1 invested by the State. Therefore, the investment requested by our Consortium will have both a collective economic impact and an economic impact in our respective regions.

My colleagues and I hope to have the opportunity to continue to build upon our already significant contribution to Connecticut's "creative" economy and ask that funding for the Consortium remain included in the new Biennium Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this important issue and request your continued support.